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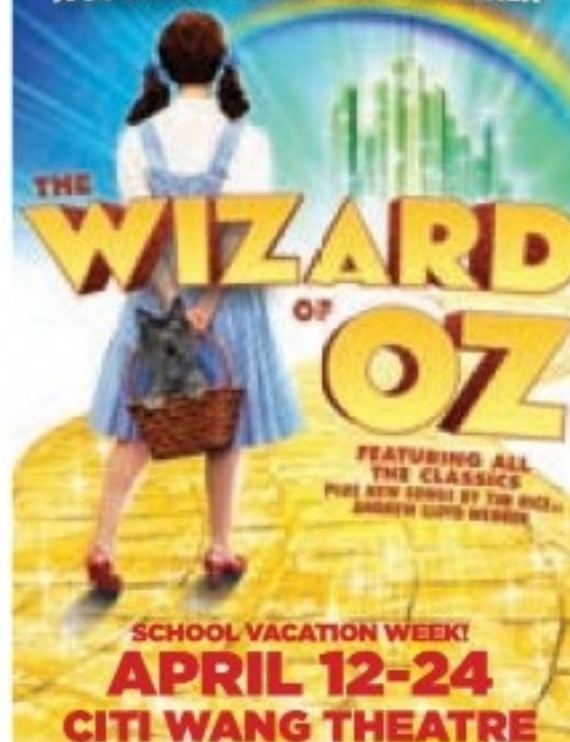
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BRIDJ-ING THE GAP



Start-up ride-sharing service hopes to complement MBTA, not compete with it. 6-7

NICOLAUS CZARNECKI

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MISSING 'SWAT CAT'

1 Boston police are asking the community to help it find the SWAT team's unofficial mascot: an adorable calico cat named "SWAT Cat." SWAT Cat "joined the BPD in 2013 when she began prowling around the Boston Police Special Weapons and Tactics base, rolling over for belly rubs from the officers, and showing up for chow time with the unit," BPD stated. **MATT LEE**



CUBA AVIATION TALKS

2 The United States hopes to conclude aviation talks with Cuba about the resumption of scheduled commercial airline flights "very, very soon," a senior U.S. State Department official said on Tuesday. The official was speaking ahead of Thursday's one-year anniversary of the United States and Cuba's agreement after 18 months of secret talks to restore diplomatic ties that Washington severed more than 50 years ago. "We do hope to achieve a successful outcome of these negotiations very, very soon." **REUTERS**

SPACE STATIONS GUEST

3 A Soyuz spacecraft carrying a Russian, an American and a Briton docked with the International Space Station on Tuesday, slightly more than six hours after blasting off from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan. Commander Yuri Malenchenko manually controlled the approach and docking process. **REUTERS**



GOLD STAR FAMILIES TREE

7 Ornaments honoring those who lost their lives while serving in the armed forces are placed on the Massachusetts Gold Star Families Tree at the Massachusetts State House on Tuesday. Joan Gutowski of Plymouth, places an ornament in honor of her son Steven, who was killed in Afghanistan in 2011.

MAIN PHOTO BY NICOLAUS CZARNECKI, ALL OTHER PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

TRAIN DRIVER SUSPENDED

4 The driver allegedly responsible for a runaway Red Line train last week has now been suspended for 30 days without pay, reports said. Tuesday's decision was made following an interview and disciplinary hearing that morning, NECN reported. David Vazquez, of Canton, could still face termination over the Dec. 10 incident, according to WCBV. **CRISTABELLE TUMOLA**



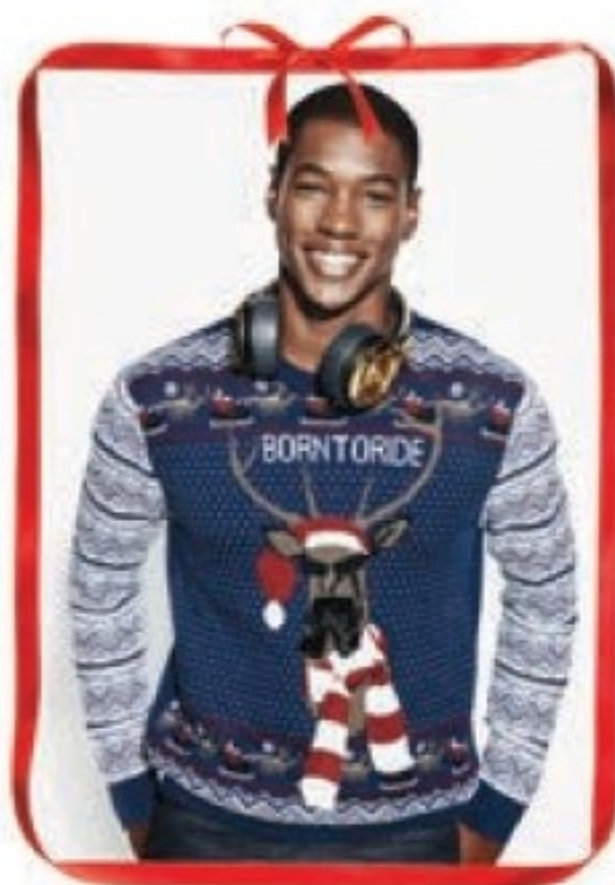
STOLEN PACKAGES CHARGE

5 Boston police rolled into East 4th and N streets in Southie on Monday after a caller reported three men were snagging packages from people's porches, ripping them open and loading the goods in shopping bags. Police combed the area and spotted one man who matched a description near East 2nd and Emmett streets. Police said that the man was carrying a shopping bag filled with merchandise, some of which had the shipping address of the residents on East 4th Street. **NATE HOMAN**

DELETE THE HATE

6 Germany said that Facebook, Google and Twitter have agreed to delete hate speech from their websites within 24 hours, a new step in the fight against rising online racism following the refugee crisis. The government has been trying to get social platforms to crack down on the rise in anti-foreigner comments. **REUTERS**



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Temps: El Niño or climate change?

Expert opinion varies on what's causing the unusual warmth this month.



SPENCER BUELL
@MetroBOS
spencer.buell@metro.us

As he waited for his train in South Station wearing a dress shirt and lightweight hoodie, Bridgewater's Tom Richards said he wasn't jumping to any conclusions about why it's been so warm in Boston this month.

"It's unseasonable, but these things go in trends," Richards said. "People are saying 'global warming is here,' but I think you can't really tell one day to the next what's going on."

But experts in the region are weighing whether the cause for the warmth is climate change, El Niño, neither or some combination of both.



A woman runs in a tank top and a witch hazel tree blooms in the Boston Public Garden during the unseasonably high temperatures. NICOLAUS CZARNECKI

"There is some emerging evidence now that climate change is leading to stronger El Niños, so the fact that we are witnessing not just an El Niño event but an El Niño event of record strength could indeed be a consequence of human-caused climate change," said professor Michael Mann, director of Penn State's Earth System Science Center.

Scott Weaver, senior

climate scientist with the Environmental Defense Fund, though, said the impact of El Niño shouldn't be overstated in the Northeast.

"El Niño doesn't have much of an impact in December" in this part of the country, Weaver said.

More likely, he said, the recent warmth has a more direct link to the warming planet.

"I can't give you a 100 percent definitive

answer," he said. "It's definitely consistent with the trend in the climate change signal. ... It's kind of like if it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it's a duck."

Ellen Mecray, northeast regional climate services director for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, meanwhile, said El Niño and climate change should both be part of the warm weather conversa-

tion this month.

"My short answer would be both," Mecray said, when asked which of the two is to blame for the lack of sweater weather. "We've got a fairly typical El Niño fall from what we've seen, and so far we're seeing a pretty mild start to the winter season. But I think it's that, combined with the fact that we have some of the warmest ocean conditions we've seen."

Frank Colby, professor of meteorology at UMass Lowell, said an unusual pattern in the jet stream might be what's behind the warm weather. The same jet stream issue was to blame for the so-called "polar vortex" this past winter, he said.

"We're kind of stuck in a warm pattern right now, which is making everyone stand up and take notice," Colby said. "It's really more of a jet stream pattern not being variable, the way that it usually is, and that I think is a climate change issue."

Outside South Station, Angel Montalvo, a Salvation Army bell ringer, said he was just thankful for the warm weather this year — he made it through most of the day with just a light jacket on, he said. Not like the cold weather will stop him if it ever comes this holiday season.

"When it's freezing, I still stay like 14 hours right here," he said.

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Boston's Bridj eyeing place in public transit

Startup ride-sharing newcomer claims it will help, not compete with MBTA.



SPENCER BUELL
@MetroBOS
spencerbuell@metro.us

It was Monday morning in Coolidge Corner, just after 8 a.m., and the Bridj vans were zipping by. Every five minutes or so, another 14-passenger van pulled over — using a Harvard Street bus stop as a pick-up location — and a half-dozen smartphone-toting commuters piled in, nestling into comfy black leather seats, ordered on-demand.

Christmas music tinkled quiet but crystal clear through Jensen speakers. There was Wi-Fi.

A year and a half into

Bridj's experiment in what's been billed as a slightly more expensive, but more efficient tech-driven alternative to the MBTA, many commuters now take the more upscale Bridj every day, never having to set foot on a bus or a train. But now, in Boston and beyond, the startup is eyeing opportunities not to compete with public transportation, but to become public transportation — or at least become part of it.

"We want to work with cities and not be antagonistic, but be kind of another option for people," said Peter Andersen, a Bridj project manager and one of the company's original employees. "We think we

have a good system. If we can make cities more efficient, that benefits everyone."

At a markup that spans a few dollars to a few cents, Bridj gives riders the option of booking trips in advance and bypassing the T, in some cases cutting their commute time in half. In doing so, Andersen said, the company acts as a pressure relief valve on the most popular

wise drive their own cars.

Bridj serves three main areas around the city — parts of Brookline, Cambridge and downtown. It plans to expand to Somerville in early 2016 and offer citywide coverage "as soon as possible," Andersen said.

He said Bridj could actually boost ridership on the T by giving commuters a dependable lift between their T station and their final stop — a solution to the so-called "last mile problem" that he said keeps people from using public transit.

And many riders, he said, aren't foregoing the T entirely. They just use Bridj as a "small luxury," he said, on days when the weather is bad

"We see ourselves as filling the gaps in the existing public transportation infrastructure."

Andersen

routes during times when trains and buses are most crowded, keeping a segment of workers off the road who might other-



The ride-share Bridj picks up passengers in Coolidge Corner on Monday. NICOLAUS CZARNECKI/

or there are service disruptions.

"We see ourselves as filling the gaps in the existing public transportation infrastructure," Andersen said, adding, "we're all about multimodality."

The startup — among the newest in the ride-sharing scene — has been figuring into conversations about public-private partnerships.

At a recent MBTA meeting on scaling back service on The Ride, the heavily subsidized door-to-door service for disabled riders, CEO Matthew George showed up to encourage the T's oversight board to keep Bridj in mind as a cheaper alternative.

The T has piloted a taxi subsidy program this year, which officials have said could expand to compa-

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nies like Uber, Lyft and, potentially, Bridj.

Ride-sharing has also been name-checked in recent talks about how, for example, Boston might replace its late-night service.

Some board members have even suggested T stops like South Station might benefit by reserving space for Bridj vans.

"Everyone is open to looking outside the box and seeing what innovation we can pursue," said MBTA fiscal board member Monica Tibbitts-Nutt in an interview.

Outside the city, Bridj's globe-trotting CEO has been pitching his tech-fueled transit ideas at conferences and municipal boardrooms. This week, Andersen said, George was talking with an undisclosed Midwestern city about a deal that would, for the first time ever, fold Bridj entirely into the regional transit agency, that city's equivalent of the MBTA.

Back at home, Massachusetts' transit commu-

nity has been cautiously watching Bridj's rise. T-watchers who spoke to Metro said they were wary of a service that up to now has been serving only the most profitable routes, and primarily wealthier commuters.

"They're in the business of making money. I'm not against that. I'm not against Bridj. I think, more power to them," said James Aloisi, a former state transportation secretary and current contributor to Commonwealth magazine, in an interview with Metro. But, he said, "in order for the T to work, you need people from across income levels taking it."

"We know that's part of the future. ... They are absolutely part of the mix," said Josh Ostroff, partnerships director for Transportation for Massachusetts. But, he added, "we need to keep the focus on customers for whom public transit is a necessity and not just a choice."



Bridj co-founder Peter Anderson

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Please donate to the Metro Magic annual holiday toy drive during the 2015 holiday season.

In keeping with the holiday spirit of giving, Metro is once again launching Tony's Metro Magic, our annual toy drive for underprivileged children in Boston, New York and Philadelphia.

This year marks the seventh

anniversary of the toy drive, which was renamed in memory of the man who oversaw the project for more than four years, Tony Metcalf, Metro's longest-running editor-in-chief. Metcalf passed away in 2013 from colon cancer at the age of 50.

Metcalf lit up every year as he saw the faces of children unwrap their holiday gifts. It

is our goal to keep that magic alive. We are now asking readers to contribute what they can to Tony's Metro Magic.

Metro has created a wish list at the Target website that readers can access by going to www.metro.us and clicking on the Tony's Metro Magic logo.

From there, just choose the toys you wish to donate, pay online using Target's

secure payment system. Your gifts, along with your name attached, will be delivered to Metro's offices in each city.

This season we hope you will remember the children who will spend the holidays in shelters or who may not have gifts to open. Even one small gift can make a big difference in a child's holiday season.

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8 BOSTON

Jury finds Chism guilty in teacher's 2013 murder

Philip Chism raped and murdered math teacher Coleen Ritzer inside a high school in Danvers.

A Massachusetts jury on Tuesday found a teenager guilty of raping and murdering a math teacher at his suburban high school in 2013, after about nine hours of deliberations.

In finding 16-year-old Philip Chism guilty, the jury rejected the defense's argument that he was suffering from a psychotic episode at the time of the 2013 attack

and therefore not criminally responsible for his actions.

Chism was 14 when he committed the killing at his high school in Danvers, north of Boston. But he was tried as an adult and could be sentenced to life in prison.

Prosecutors presented voluminous evidence during the month-long trial, including school surveillance videos, to support allegations that Chism followed his teacher, Colleen Ritzer, 24, into a bathroom after school, strangled and raped her, and carted her body in a recycling bin to a wooded area off



Chism WENDY MAEDA/GLOBE STAFF

campus.

The trial at Essex County Superior Court in Salem, Massachusetts, was occasionally delayed by Chism, who

at one point refused to return to the courtroom after a break telling his attorney that he was "about to explode."

REUTERS

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NYPD's Bratton: L.A. overreacted to school threat



Bratton GETTY IMAGES

New York City's police commissioner said a similar email threatening schools here was not credible.

After an alleged terror threat shut down Los Angeles schools, NYPD top cop Bill Bratton said a similar threat here at "almost exactly the same time" was deemed a hoax and that L.A. overreacted by shuttering more than 1,000 public schools.

The emailed threat, which authorities said was "routed through Germany" but likely local in origin, came less than two weeks after a married couple inspired by the Islamic State killed 14 people and wounded 22 others at a county office building in San Bernardino, just 60 miles away.

"L.A. is a huge school system," said Bratton, who had served as police chief in Los Angeles. "To disrupt the daily schedules of half a million school children, their parents, day care, buses based on an anonymous email. ... I think it was a significant over-

reaction."

Los Angeles Police Chief Beck said it was "irresponsible" to criticize the decision in the aftermath of San Bernardino attack.

L.A. Schools chief Ramon Cortines defended his choice.

"Based on past circumstance, I could not take the chance," Cortines said at a news conference.

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti said he backed the decision by Cortines.

Beck said the email mentioned assault rifles and machine pistols and implied the use of explosives. He said officers would search all of the district's campuses.

But the unprecedented move at the second-largest public school system in the United States

left some 643,000 students and their families scrambling to make last-minute alternate arrangements and drew wide criticism.

Congressman Brad Sherman, a Democrat from California, told

CNN the person who sent the email claimed to be an extremist Muslim, but said the text of the message gave reason to doubt that.

New York Mayor Bill de Blasio also cited word choices in the note as a reason that city considered the threat a likely hoax, saying that the avowed Muslim who wrote it failed to capitalize "Allah."

Cortines, in defending his decision to take such a dramatic step, said the threat stood out from most that the district received in its seriousness and scope, referencing multiple campuses and mentioning backpacks and other packages.

"It is very easy for people to jump to conclusions, and I have been around long

enough to know that usually what people think in the first few hours is not what plays out in later hours," Garcetti said. "But decisions have to be made in a matter of minutes."

REUTERS/METRO

"I think it was a significant overreaction."

Bratton

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Surfing Santas in Australia set record



PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES



A group of 320 surfing Santas set a Guinness World Record on Tuesday for the largest surf lesson. Sydney's famous Bondi Beach became a sea of red and white as the group got into the festive spirit by donning the Santa costumes and riding the waves. A minimum 250 surfers were needed to set the record, but Guinness World Records said some 320 people took part in the 30-minute lesson. The event was organized to raise awareness about mental health issues. **REUTERS**

US arrests three men over hacking scheme targeting 60 million

Three men were arrested on Monday for engaging in a wide-ranging hacking and spamming scheme that targeted personal information of 60 million people, including Comcast customers, U.S. prosecutors announced Tuesday.

Timothy Livingston, 30, Tomasz Chmielarz, 32, and Devin McArthur, 27, were named in an indictment filed in federal court in Newark, New Jersey, that charged them with conspiracy to commit fraud and related activity among other offenses.

Prosecutors said Livingston, a Boca Raton, Florida, resident, was the leader of a series of computer hacking and illegal spamming schemes that targeted multiple companies and generated illegal profits exceeding \$2 million.

The three men were arrested at their respective residences on Tuesday morning, a spokesman for U.S. Attorney Paul Fishman in New Jersey said.

Michael Koribanics, Chmielarz's lawyer, said his client would plead not guilty at a court hearing on Tuesday. A lawyer for Livingston did not immediately respond to a request for comment, and an attorney for McArthur could not be identified.

Prosecutors said Livingston, who owned



Comcast GETTY IMAGES

a spam company called "A Whole Lot of Nothing LLC," hired Chmielarz of Rutherford, New Jersey, to author hacking tools and other programs that facilitated the hacking and spamming schemes.

Among the companies they targeted was a Pennsylvania-based telecommunications company that employed McArthur, a resident of Ellicott City, Maryland, who installed hacking tools in company networks to gain access to records for 50 million people, prosecutors said.

The company was not identified by name in court papers. But McArthur's LinkedIn page says he worked at Comcast Corp. during the period in question. A Comcast spokeswoman had no immediate comment.

Livingston and Chmielarz also compromised tens of thou-

sands of peoples' email accounts, including customers of a New York telecommunications company, which they then used to send spam, the indictment said.

Other companies targeted in the schemes included a New York-based technology and consulting company whose website was compromised and a Texas-based credit monitoring firm that was hacked, the indictment said.

In the case of the unnamed credit monitoring firm, the indictment said Livingston paid Chmielarz to write a program to steal a database containing 10 million records.

When law enforcement seized Livingston's computer in July, they discovered a database with 7 million of that company's records, the indictment said.

REUTERS

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Jennifer Lawrence not down with 'Hunger Games' prequels

Lionsgate recently announced plans to develop some prequels to the "Hunger Games" franchise — because they like making money, no surprise there. But they were probably banking on at least a little support from series star Jennifer Lawrence, even if she wouldn't necessarily take part in them. Well, they really should have checked with her first. "That can't be true. It's too soon," she tells E! News when confronted with the development. "Screw that. No, way too soon. No support. I think it's too soon. The body's not even cold yet." I wonder if she thinks it's too soon.

Diane Kruger and Norman Reedus think you can't see them making out

Diane Kruger is apparently a really, really big "Walking Dead" fan. The "Inglourious Basterds" star was recently spotted trying to go incognito with fan favorite Norman Reedus at the East Village's 12th Street Alehouse, but that turned out to be a rather foolish plan. "They were both dressed very casually. Norman was wearing a hat, and Diane had barely any makeup on," an eyewitness tells Radar Online. "They ordered whiskey and immediately walked hand-in-hand to a table in the back corner."



ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

And it's in that back corner where things got,

shall we say, interesting as the pair tore into a "high school makeout session," according to the source. "They were on top of each other. Every time I looked over, she was on him or he was on her. They clearly thought they were incognito. They thought

no one could possibly recognize them in that hole in the wall." Turns out they were wrong. You know who'd probably be curious to hear more about this? Kruger's boyfriend of nine years, Joshua Jackson. This won't be awkward at all.



@kirstiealley

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Bill Cosby can't tour anymore. Can't work. Can't do anything except sit with enraged Camille. Let's hope he lives a long long time.

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Actress Alicia Vikander

The Golden Globe nominee talks about her star-making role in "The Danish Girl."



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Before she read the script, Alicia Vikander says she wasn't aware "The Danish Girl" had a strong second female role. The film tells the tale of Lili Elbe (played by Eddie Redmayne), one of the first people, in the 1920s, to transition from male to female. The life change also meant Lili parted ways with wife Gerda, played by Vikander. The 27-year-old "Ex Machina" actress says the film explores both the life of a transgender pioneer and what her transition did to her relationship with Gerda. Here the Swedish actress, who is speaking to us while making the next "Bourne" film, talks about the pain of letting a loved one go.



In "The Danish Girl," Eddie Redmayne plays Lili Elbe, one of the first people to undergo gender reassignment surgery, which means parting ways with her former wife, Gerda (Alicia Vikander). FOCUS FEATURES

You do a lot of period films, from "A Royal Affair" to "Anna Karenina" to "Testament of Youth." Do you sometimes feel lost going from one era to another? I get stuck in them. Sometimes I don't know what century I'm in. But it's a great skill to have as an actor; to have sets and costumes already there. It does a lot for you to be able to throw yourself

into a new story.

"The Danish Girl" does bring you back to portraying Scandinavian culture.

It's part of my history and my life growing up. During "A Royal Affair," I loved being back in the 18th century. I was able to find personal connections to Caroline Mathilde [her character], and it gave me a lot to being someone's

voice from such a long time ago. With "Testament of Youth," I was able to find people who knew Vera Brittain. With "The Danish Girl," we tried to find historical inspirations, but it was also about meeting people, who had such generosity, in the transgender community — especially people like my character who had been friends, or loved ones, of people

Who won at the 2015 Boston Music Awards?

The Boston Music Awards took over the Sinclair in Cambridge on Dec. 9 and 10, inviting 17 local acts to perform for the two-day event. The 28th annual ceremony honoring local musicians moved its locale to the restaurant-rock venue, changed its voting guidelines and adopted an invite-only policy for night one under its new ownership, welcome changes for some attending honorees.

"I feel like the BMAs opening up the committee was a huge step toward saying, 'I hear you, I see you,'" said Pop Artist and Female Vocalist of the Year-winning artist Ruby Rose Fox.

This year's BMA co-owners, Paul Armstrong and Jake Brennan, doubled the number of voters to a 400-member nomination committee and expanded celebration into a two-night affair to celebrate Hall of Fame winner Evan Dando of the Lemonheads.

"[We want to] celebrate the artists who work around the clock, 365 days a year," said



Speedy Ortiz BOSTON MUSIC AWARDS

Armstrong.

Additionally, moving toward a performance-centered program at a music venue changed the tone of the evening, putting the focus back on the music.

"It was very show-focused," added 2014 BMA nominee and scene supporter Glenn di Benedetto. "You couldn't really get away from the fact that these were really good acts."

There were 29 awards given out that night, but here are five you can't walk away without knowing.

Pop Artist of the Year: Ruby Rose Fox

Powerful vocals and bluesy rock 'n' roll define the nine-piece locals still hoping for a national breakout moment. Considering their spirited live show and carefully crafted pop songs, expect it to happen sooner than later.

International Artist of the Year: Shun Ng

Fingerpicking guitarist Shun Ng may have been brought up in Singapore, but he's made a name for himself in Boston

since studying at Berklee College of Music. Now 25, the soul singer/songwriter has caught the attention of Queen guitarist Brian May and famed record producer Quincy Jones.

New Artist of the Year: Palehound

Singer/songwriter Ellen Kempner's guitar skills and emotion-filled lyrics on her rock project Palehound make it difficult to believe that she's only 21. Listen to her debut record for the poetic lyrics but stay for its encompassing, visceral feeling.

Artist of the Year: Speedy Ortiz

The Sadie Dupuis-fronted group spins rock into an off-kilter amalgam of spiky guitars and intelligent lyrics on the intimate aspects of life. The concoction is certainly working: After developing in the Boston DIY scene, Speedy Ortiz have since graduated to international club tours and festival dates.

CHRIS LEO PALERMINO



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transitioning.

What kinds of things did you learn from people who had been close to people transitioning?
Every single story ends up being extremely different. Sometimes they said it was tough to give them that time. They said they were also transitioning. Like any couple going through a huge change, they both needed to find their feet on the ground in a new location. That's something I could relate to with whatever you're going through as everything's changing around.

I'd argue this is also a great breakup film, and one that isn't about a couple who split bitterly. It's about their struggles to maintain a connection despite parting ways romantically.
Love includes being able to let that person go, the person you love the most. You still have affection for someone, even when things get bad. It was a

unique story, but I was amazed by the romantic aspect and the love between them. Of course they go off on different roads, but they go on the same journey. There are scenes where they both know that things are hard, but they don't know what the future's going to be. They know that, and they're still able to reach out and tell the other person they're connected somehow. That's something I felt from page one to the end, that they do have a connection. Even though their relationship changes, that's something they'll always have — it will always be there. That got to me. There are a lot of emotional scenes, but those are the ones, where they try to reach out and connect, when I started to cry reading it. And that very rarely happens.



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The pre-'Star Wars' jitters

Since the day the new "Star Wars" film was announced, I've been thinking about what story it might tell. I've debated friends who are afraid to get excited because of their disappointment in the prequels. I've spoken out online about how Rey was missing in the toy set at Target. I've waited in line at midnight to buy an insane amount of toys. I read all the new books. I chase my cats around the house with my little BB-8 droid. I've loved every second of the anticipation. And now — it's almost here. Only a couple more days. It's surreal and frankly, a bit worrisome.

"Star Wars" had a profound effect on my childhood. Millions of you could say the same. I wasn't the only little girl who was delighted to see a female character who kicked ass. I wasn't the only kid who desperately wished for a Millennium Falcon. I wasn't the only person who bitched about George Lucas changing things in the new edi-

JENNA BUSCH

Geek Girl in Hollywood

Jenna Busch takes on the way pop culture snubs its female fans. For more columns, visit metro.us/jenna-busch as well as her site, [legion of leia](http://www.legionofleia.com) (www.legionofleia.com)



tions. (Han shot first!) I wasn't the only one who stood in line for the prequels and left hoping I just "watched it wrong."

So here we are, right before



We hope everything's OK with Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher) in "Star Wars: The Force Awakens," which finally comes out Dec. 18. LUCASFILM

the beginning of a new hope (sorry, but there was no way to avoid that one) for the future of our beloved franchise. I'll admit to being nervous. How can anything live up to this hype? Despite my words to the contrary, am I expecting too much?

In sitting here, thinking about it, I've come to the conclusion that, in the end,

it doesn't matter what story we see. I mean, I want it to be amazing. I want to be blown away. I want to use all the tissues I'm bringing to the theater just in case. I want it to be good.

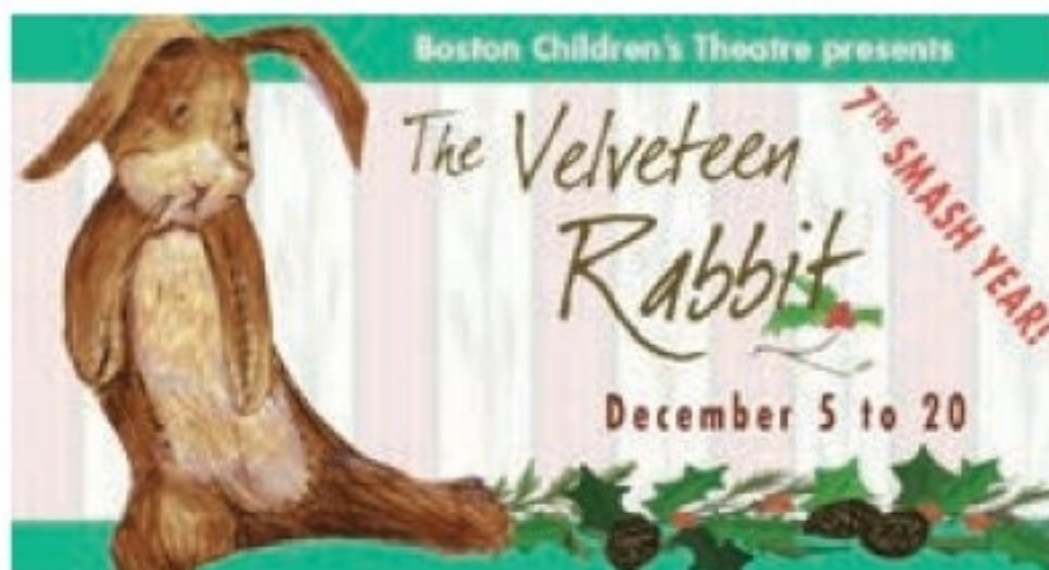
What I mean by "it doesn't matter" is this: The anticipation of a new Star Wars film has done something for the geek community. It's done

something for the world. Sitting at a concert at Comic-Con, with 8,000 people waving lightsabers is something I never thought would happen, but it did. My better half is in China, seeing posters for the same film I am. I tweet #StarWars and I'm tweeted back in a dozen languages.

Everything else in the world has gone crazy: red-haired

nutters saying horrible things about other religions, mass shootings, terrorist attacks. It's hard to watch the news. Despite that, we have "Star Wars" to bring us together. In the end, whether it's good or bad, we all have something to talk about. Something that unites us. I'm counting the hours. I'm buying more tissues. May the Force be with us all.

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Taniya Nayak knows a thing or two about holiday lights

The Milton designer and host of "The Great Christmas Light Fight" has tips for lighting up your holidays.

LINDA CLARKE
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When it comes to over-the-top Christmas decor, designer Taniya Nayak has seen it all.

The Milton-based founder of Taniya Nayak Design is the third-season co-host and judge of "The Great Christmas Light Fight" on ABC. The seasonal series tasks teams of neighborhoods and families to create extreme and creative holiday light displays for the chance to win \$50,000.

Nayak said she wasn't well schooled in the art of pushing the limits of Griswold-inspired Christmas decor before the show, but she can offer a



Taniya Nayak sheds light on your holiday stresses. LEFT, MAGDALENA M.; ABOVE, ISTOCK

few tips on how to keep your own display under control. She says, "I've learned quite a bit about Christmas lights."

Go LED

"LED lights can save so much on the electricity bill, you really are saving a ton of money and energy, too," Nayak says. "Also, with LED there are so many options with color. There are some 14 million varia-

tions in shade. Fourteen million, and that's a conservative estimate I go with."

Keep your trimming on track

"Some artificial trees come strung with lighting and that saves so much time. Pre-lit trees are a game changer," Nayak says.

"If you still [favor] string lights, though, there are ways to make it

easier. Try stringing them vertically and go up and down instead of round and round. There's less running round and round the tree and it's easier to get them even."

Don't be a basket case

"The worst thing with lights is when they get tangled," she says. "One of the easiest ways to store them is to take a desk-style waste-paper basket and wrap the lights around the outside and tape the ends in place. Then you can use the inside to store the ornaments and it's all together, ready for next year."

But how much is too much?

"There really is no wrong way to do it, it's all about the Christmas spirit," says Nayak. "It's the holidays, so light it up!"

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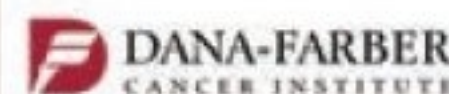
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Healthy holiday helpings



Dana-Farber offers tips to fight cancer with your fork this holiday season

The holidays are in full swing and festive food is everywhere. "While these foods are delicious to eat, some have the added bonus of containing cancer-preventing nutrients," says Stephanie Meyers, MS, RD/LDN, a nutritionist at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston.

Pumpkin isn't just for pie

Pumpkin can be a holiday staple for many families. And for some, it may be one of the tastiest ways to enhance the body's own natural cancer fighting ability, notes Meyers. Pumpkins are packed with nutrients called carotenoids, which have been linked to the prevention of colon, prostate, breast, and lung cancer. Although many people only eat pumpkin when it is made into a pie, it can also be enjoyed in a variety of

other ways, including roasted pumpkin, pumpkin soup and high fiber pumpkin muffins or bread.

It's the bright color that gives pumpkins their rich nutrients, so look for other orange vegetables, like sweet potatoes, carrots, and butternut and acorn squash. All are also high in carotenoids.

Meyers stresses, "It is more beneficial to consume carotenoids from whole foods rather than from supplements, because carotenoids in pill form do not appear to have the same protective properties."

In fact, that is true of many of the nutrients in foods. Eating whole foods typically provides greater health benefits than taking a dietary supplement.

An apple a day

Apples are another food packed with cancer preventing properties, thanks to the nutrient quercetin, which protects DNA in the body's cells from damage that could lead to the development of cancer.

To get the most protection against cancer from apples, eat them with the skin on and not combined with sugar and fats, like in a pie.

Not just for the holidays

Meyers reminds her patients that cranberries aren't just for the holidays and encourages them to eat cranberries year-round. That's because cranberries contain benzoic acid, which has been shown to inhibit the growth of lung cancer, colon cancer, and some forms of leukemia.

She recommends buying bags of cranberries now, while they are in season and at their nutritional peak, and popping them in the freezer for later. This will help ensure that the berries will provide the highest level of cancer protection whenever cooking with them — all year long.



Color your world

The overall key to finding cancer-fighting foods is to look for a lot of color. Look for colorful produce like pomegranates, tomatoes, eggplant, grapes, cherries, and turnip. The brighter and richer the pigment, the higher the level of nutrients.

"You want to load up your plate with as much colorful plant-based foods as you can," explains Meyers. "Eating a plant-based diet all year long is the best way to help lower your risk of cancer."

For more information on nutrition and cancer visit www.dana-farber.org

Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, a principal teaching affiliate of Harvard Medical School, is world renowned for its leadership in adult and pediatric cancer treatment and research. Designated as a comprehensive cancer center by the National Cancer Institute (NCI), it is one of the largest recipients among independent hospitals of NCI and National Institutes of Health grant funding. For more information, go to www.danafarber.org. Follow Dana-Farber on Facebook: www.facebook.com/danafarbercancerinstitute and on Twitter: @danafarber.

NFL power rankings | by Luke Miller

No. 1

Panthers (13-0)



Carolina's defense had a statement to make after its surprising shootout against New Orleans, and the Falcons were the perfect opportunity to send that message.

Four takeaways and only 234 allowed yards later, they were right back on track.



No. 4

Seahawks (8-5)



Thomas Rawls' season-ending injury is bad news, but it just means the passing game can keep shouldering the load. Russell Wilson through the first nine games: 10 touchdowns, seven interceptions. Russell Wilson through the last four games: 16 touchdowns, a big, fat zero interceptions.

No. 6

Packers (9-4)



The Packers got 230 yards on the ground, easily their best performance of the season last week. If they can keep that balance as they end the season against Oakland, Arizona and Minnesota, they may just jump back to the elite conversations they were in at 6-0.

No. 8

Chiefs (8-5)



Week 14 wasn't pretty, but it's still a whole lot prettier than Week's 2 through 7 were for Kansas City. Alex Smith threw his first interception in 312 passes, ending a franchise-record streak. And second-year linebacker Dee Ford came up big for the Chiefs with three sacks on Sunday (his first three).

No. 10

Jets (8-5)



The Jets sure look good when everything is rolling: Harvard product Ryan Fitzpatrick has nine touchdowns and no interceptions in their last three games, all victories, and just set a career high for touchdown passes with 25 on the season. They are in a sprint for a Wild Card berth.

No. 2

Cardinals (11-2)



Make it seven wins in a row for the Cardinals on the back of Carson Palmer and whatever weapons he feels like finding each week. Arizona is cruising toward a first-round bye, but the road there won't be easy. They finish the season by playing the resurgent Eagles, Packers and Seahawks.

No. 3

Patriots (11-2)



As good as the Patriots are at overcoming injuries and inserting new cogs into the machine, they are a different team with Rob Gronkowski on the football field. Gronk hit both the 1,000-yard and 10-touchdown mark on the season in Sunday night's victory over the Texans.

No. 5

Broncos (10-3)



Denver's drop in the rankings is all thanks to a few pretty bad drops by their players Sunday afternoon. And the run game (34 yards on 21 carries) vanishing again. At what point does this defense (which allowed 126 total yards and lost) wonder what exactly they have to do?

No. 7

Steelers (8-5)



Everything's coming up roses for Pittsburgh; It's easy to forget the season began very differently. A big part of their success has been DeAngelo Williams' ability to replace Le'Veon Bell. All eyes will now be on how the 32-year-old back holds up down the stretch.

No. 9

Bengals (10-3)



Not only does the loss to Pittsburgh mean the division isn't quite wrapped up, the loss of Andy Dalton throws a wrench into everything the Bengals have worked so hard to maintain this season. Dalton could be back for the playoffs, and earning a bye will mean more time for Dalton to heal.

No. 11

Vikings (8-5)



It's been a disappointing couple weeks for the Vikings, who were in first place not too long ago, but if there's one thing this team does this season, it's bounce back, and the season-ending game against the Packers looms large. The banged-up squad looks to continue to rebound.

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Pats lose Blount for year

As the Patriots slowly return their bruised and battered offensive weapons to the field (most notably Rob Gronkowski who was back last week), the team took a step back as they announced running back LeGarrette Blount was done of the year with an injured hip. The big, down-hill running back picked up 703 yards on the ground and scored six touchdowns this year. Free agent running back Montee Ball signed with the Patriots on Tuesday and will be added to their practice squad, according to multiple reports. **EVAN MACY; PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES**

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12/11-13 Sunday River
12/12 Sunday River
12/19 Killington
12/20 Loon
12/26 Jay Peak
12/27 Sunday River
12/29 Bretton Woods
12/30-1/3 Quebec City

FEBRUARY

2/3 Sunday River
2/6 Jay Peak
2/7 Bretton Woods
2/12 Killington
2/12-15 Montreal
2/13 Stowe
2/14 Jay Peak
2/15 Sunday River
2/18 Bretton Woods
2/19-21 Sugarloaf
2/20 Jay Peak
2/21 Killington
2/24 Bolton Valley
2/26-28 Sunday River
2/27 Sunday River
2/28 Loon



JANUARY

1/2 Jay Peak
1/3 Killington
1/6 Sunday River
1/9 Stowe
1/10 Cannon
1/15-18 Sugarloaf
1/16 Sunday River
1/17 Killington
1/18 Loon
1/22-24 Sunday River
1/23 Jay Peak
1/24 Sugarbush
1/29 Sunday River
1/29-31 Orford, Canada
1/30 Stowe
1/31 Sunday River

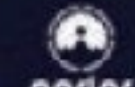
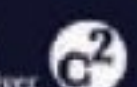
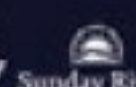
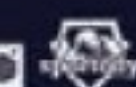
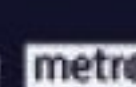
MARCH

3/2 Killington
3/4-6 Sugarloaf
3/5 Jay Peak
3/6 Sunday River
3/11 Cannon
3/12 Stowe
3/13 Sunday River
3/17 Loon
3/18-20 Sunday River

APRIL

4/1-3 Sunday River
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#R212 Mary Jemeison	Household Goods
#T820 Richard Holmes	Household Goods
#G552 Hency Hernandez	Household Goods
#G516 Bryant Monsanto	Household Goods
#H606 Kevin Murray	Household Goods

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Aries Money comes and goes. Don't be fooled by promises made about a so-called wonder product. A happy attitude will attract just as much attention.



Taurus Expand your knowledge. Plan a trip and sign up for conferences that will help you get ahead. You will make headway if you sport a healthy outlook.



Gemini Before you go all-out, make concessions to fit your budget. Change is good, but it must be limited to what you can afford.



Cancer A positive outlook will make all the difference in the world when it comes to getting along with others. You will make new friends if you participate.



Leo You can bring about favorable change if you initiate discussions with experienced individuals. Do whatever it takes to improve your health.



Virgo You will find a way to realize your dreams if you keep an eye out for the unusual. Expand your interests and incorporate your ideas and skills.



Libra Don't worry about opposition. Focus on what you want and how you can go about getting it. Embrace change.



Scorpio Keep your emotions in check. Love is in the stars, and a positive change to your standard of living is possible.



Sagittarius What tempts you will not be worth it. Don't plunge into unknown territory without proper research. Change is good, but only if it's realistic.



Capricorn Observe before you act. The way you handle others to please everyone will lead to victory. Don't be afraid to be different.



Aquarius A unique plan of attack will help you clear up any unfinished business. Keeping busy will help you more clearly see emotional situations.



Pisces Double-check any information you are given. Overspending on something you cannot afford will lead to more stress. **EUGENIA LAST**

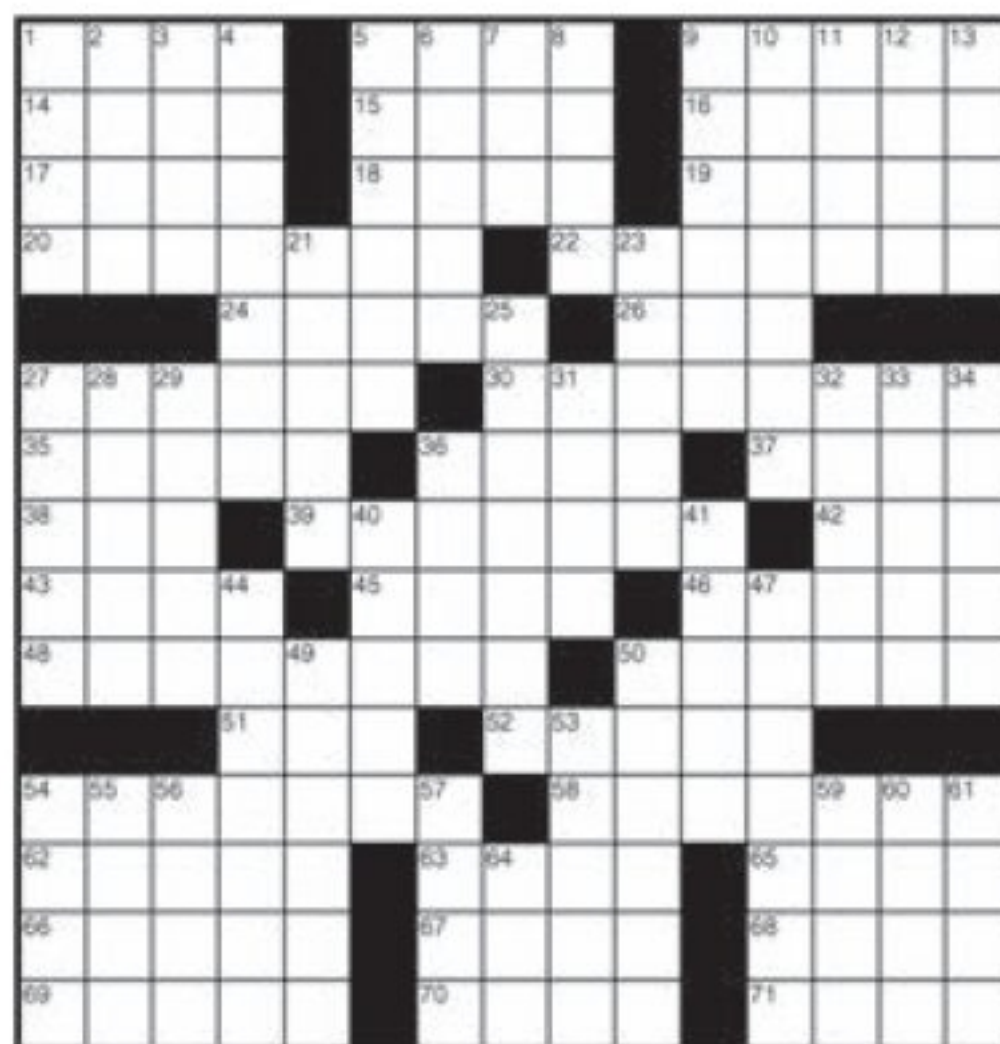
Across

1 Browser's delight
5 Distress acutely
9 Built-up
14 Feverish chill
15 All, in combos
16 Brain surgeon's prefix
17 Farm structure
18 Beethoven was born there
19 Majestic wader
20 Advice
22 Of various sorts
24 Up — (stumped)
26 Pa Cartwright
27 Red wine
30 Puts out the fire
35 Ibsen's — Gabler
36 Luncheon salad
37 "She Loves You" refrain
38 Left Bank pal
39 Sage, in India
42 Hail, to Caesar
43 Energize
45 Timber wolf
46 Rented a U-Haul
48 Worth it
50 Affectionate gesture
51 On the — vive
52 Spiral-horned antelope
54 Woke up
58 By oneself
62 Pelts

63 Cyrus' realm, today
65 Point the finger at
66 Run — (go against)
67 Rake
68 Indigo dye
69 — Haute, Ind.
70 Warm greeting
71 Past the deadline

Down

1 Not fem.
2 Exchange premium
3 Humdinger
4 Nimoy or Bernstein
5 Mr. Redford
6 Soap plant
7 TV news source
8 Gentle
9 Odd
10 Furniture style
11 Laird's accent
12 "Iliad" deity
13 Memo
21 Prepare clams
23 Steel girder (hyph.)
25 Even-tempered
27 Grain husks
28 Monkey's cousin
29 Tooodle-oo!
31 Golden Rule word
32 Fling



33 Icicle sites
34 Loses one's coat
36 You, once
40 Michael Caine role
41 Fridge maker
44 Cordial

47 Sort of number
49 Fracas
50 Film festival city
53 Maui feasts
54 At the drop of —
55 Crawling with

56 Nose stimulus
57 Quaint weapon
59 Elcar or Wynter
60 Be like uranium
61 Remove from text
64 Vive le —!

For crossword answers, go to metro.us/crossword-answers



metro.us/sudoku

easy

			9		3			
6		8		5	7			2
3	7							
	3			1	8		6	
	6	1				8	2	
	5		6	4			7	
							4	8
5			3	7		2		9
			5		2			

hard

			1					9
	7			9		6	2	
2	3	9					8	
	4		5	6		8		
6								5
		5		7	4		3	
	2					5	6	3
	6	4		3			1	
7					2			



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Which Tim Burton movie are you?



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